GUIDE TO THE RC1 BELORUSSIA FILE

[The RC1 Belorussia file contains specific data on Belorussia (White Russia) and its people. The origin of the name White Russians or White Ruthenians is uncertain, consequently the term Belorussia is preferred. For most of its history, Belorussia has not been a distinct political unit, but is rather an ethnic unit, identified by its language, religion, and folk literature.

The modern Belorussian SSR is located between 51° and 56°15'N. latitude and 23° and 33° E. longitude. It is bordered on the east and northeast by the RSFSR, on the south by the Ukrainian SSR, on the southwest by Poland, and on the northwest and north by Lithuania and Latvia. The 1970 population of the Belorussian SSR was 9,002,000 and the density in 1968 was 111/sq. mile. There are not many large cities. Most of the people live in small rural villages. In the cities, the Russian language is spoken and the culture is considerably Russified while the rural areas have retained the Belorussian language and culture to a larger degree.

The Belorussian language is part of the eastern group of the Slavic branch of Indo-European. It is most closely related to Ukrainian and Russian. The dialects form two major groups. The southwestern ones are more similar to Ukrainian dialects, and the northeastern ones are closer to Russian.

The territory of contemporary Belorussia was settled by the Slavic-speaking Kriviane tribe by at least the 10th century A.D. and was part of the Kievan state from the 10th to the 13th century. It received the Eastern form of Christianity

along with the Cyrillic alphabet. In the 14th century, Belorussia was included in the Lithuanian state and later in the Polish-Lithuanian state. From this union, the Belorussians were exposed to the Roman Catholic religion, the Latin alphabet, and other Western influences. Several centuries of conflict ensued between the Russian Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian state. In 1795, when Poland was partitioned, Belorussia became part of the Russian Empire. After World War I there were 18 million people in the area of Belorussia. By treaty between Poland and the Soviet Union, part of the territory was incorporated in the RSFSR, part was given to Poland (this territory later became part of the RSFSR also), and the third part became the Belorussian SSR.

Religiously, Belorussia is divided among Orthodox, Uniate, and Latin-rite Catholics.

Belorussia is predominantly agricultural, the most important crops being rye, potatoes, and flax. In 1968 over 65% of the population was engaged in agriculture. Since Sovietization, handicraft cooperatives have been established. The most important products of these cooperatives are knitted fabrics, sewing articles, footwear, furniture, carriages, hardware, and musical instruments. The most important industries are food processing, metal-working, and machine building.

There are five sources in the RC1 Belorussia file, two of which are translations from Russian. The sources are not continuously numbered, there are no sources numbered 1-5, 10, or 11 at this time. These sources were all published after World War II and deal primarily with politics and economics. 6: Krushinskii is a translation from Russian. It is a description of the inadequate educational system in Soviet Belorussia. It attributes low attendance rates to the lack of textbooks, fuel, and buildings. 7: Krushinsky is also a translation from Russian. It consists of personal recollections

of the author, an official of the Belorussian SSR, of political purges between the two World Wars. 8: Redmer is an UNRRA report on the Belorussian economy just after World War II. 9: American Russian Institute is the Constitution of the Belorussian SSR as amended to 1947. 12: Vakar is a brief article on the possible etymology of the name "White Russia."

The RC1 file contains very little cultural data and it is not recommended for comparative purposes. The file was processed in 1955-1956.]